

Reports from Washington Say Trump Plans to Fire Secretary of State Rex Tillerson



Washington, December 1 (RHC)-- The White House has reportedly developed a plan to oust U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, whose relationship with President Donald Trump has been tense, and replace him with CIA Director Mike Pompeo.

According to a new report published in The New York Times, White House Chief of Staff John Kelly developed the transition plan and has discussed it with other officials. The report, citing senior Trump administration officials who insisted on anonymity, says that Senator Tom Cotton, a Republican from Arkansas, would replace Pompeo at the Central Intelligence Agency. The shake-up would take place around the end of the year or shortly afterward, the newspaper said.

The Senate confirmed the 65-year-old Tillerson as secretary of state in early February. He had previously been the CEO of ExxonMobil, one of the largest oil and gas companies in the world. It was not immediately clear whether Trump has given final approval to the plan, but he has been said to have been at odds with Tillerson over a host of major foreign policy issues.

Tillerson's departure has been widely anticipated for months, but associates have said he planned to

remain on until the end of the year. Even so, an end-of-year exit would make his time in office the shortest of any U.S. secretary of state in nearly 120 years.

Tensions between Tillerson and Trump have been simmering for months, sometimes visibly. The two have publicly diverged on some of the administration's most crucial foreign policy challenges, including Iran and North Korea. Last month, Tillerson dismissed a report by NBC that said he had been on the verge of resigning from his position during the summer over mounting policy disputes with the White House.

NBC reported in early October that Tillerson referred to Trump as a "moron" after a meeting in July at the Pentagon with members of his national security team and Cabinet members. A few days after the report, Trump harshly criticized Tillerson in an interview with Forbes magazine, suggesting that he's smarter than the top U.S. diplomat. Trump offered to compare IQ tests with Tillerson and claimed Tillerson would lose.

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